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CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY

Exploitation of child labour

Written statement submitted by the United Nations Children's Fund

1. Since the statement by UNICEF before the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, there have been several positive developments in efforts to better understand and ultimately reduce child prostitution and the sale and trafficking of children. Many of these efforts, mainly by non-governmental and religious organizations, have been documented in publications by such groups as the International Catholic Child Bureau (The Sexual Exploitation of Children: Field Responses), the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism (Caught in Modern Slavery) and Rädda Barnen. These documents and more recent reports, including particularly the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn, reveal that this is a worldwide problem.

2. They also reveal the existence of internationally organized rings of paedophiles and sex tourism that have significantly increased the amount of child prostitution in a number of developing countries. Furthermore, evidence has come to light of an increase in inter-country trafficking in children for exploitation in prostitution, particularly in Asia but also in Africa and Latin America. This is no longer primarily a domestic issue, but one which

must be addressed on an international scale. Fortunately, a number of Governments in the countries most affected have begun to take action to discourage sex tourism and investigate this problem. However, cooperation among countries still needs to be much more developed.

3. Recent activities by several NGO networks such as the International Catholic Child Bureau, the International Abolitionist Federation, the newly formed End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism and Rädda Barnen have greatly enhanced public awareness of this problem and form the beginnings of an international network to respond to this problem. UNICEF looks forward to continued cooperation with these organizations and concerned Governments and inter-governmental organizations.

4. UNICEF has also been actively responding to the problems of children adversely affected by armed conflict, particularly in the aftermath of the Gulf War. Of particular interest are new initiatives by country offices in peace education and support for children psychologically traumatized by exposure to or involvement in armed conflict.

5. UNICEF is gratified to note the increased efforts to combat child labour by the International Labour Organisation and look forward to continuing cooperation with the ILO in dealing with this, the most widespread form of child exploitation. The positive response of several South and South-East Asian countries to the problems of child labour are particularly encouraging.

6. Finally, we would like to note that the 1991 UNICEF Executive Board has authorized an interregional programme for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances to help expand UNICEF-assisted programming and provide support for NGO networks that are working with abused, neglected and exploited children.